DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 369 290 FL 022 074

AUTHOR Strong, Gregory
TITLE Teaching Writing with Small Groups.
PUB DATE Dec 93
NOTE 26p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Journal Articles (080)
JOURNAL CIT Thought Currents in English Literature; v66 p129-52 Dec 1993

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Classroom Techniques; Educational Change; English (Second Language); Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Revision (Written Composition); Secondary Education; *Second Language Instruction; *Small Group Instruction; Student Evaluation; Teacher Role; *Teaching Methods; Writing Exercises; *Writing Instruction; Writing Research; *Writing Strategies

ABSTRACT

Until recently, writing instruction had been dominated by an emphasis on rhetorical forms, rules, and written products. This view has been superseded for the most part by a mode of instruction whereby teachers assist students in developing planning and revising skills, with less emphasis on grammatical rules. Similar trends are evident in second language instruction, where brainstorming, word mapping, journal writing, sentence combining, and peer evaluation activities are being used to help students develop planning and revising skills in the target language. Many of these activities are especially effective when used in small group instruction. Examples and discussions of these activities are included. Contains 42 references. (MDM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 369 290

Teaching Writing with Small Groups

Gregory Strong

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Gregory Strong

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Thought Currents in English Literature
Volume LXVI, December 1993

The English Literary Society of
AOYAMAGAKUIN UNIVERSITY

FL022074

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Teaching Writing with Small Groups

Gregory Strong

I. Writing Process Research

In English teaching, the current view of the act of writing is that it is a cognitive process. This process involves planning which is largely the generation of ideas, and two other key sub-processes, translating, and reviewing.

The concept of writing as a cognitive process and therefore one amenable to instruction developed from a review of 504 studies of English by Braddock, Lloyd-Jones & Schoer (1963). These researchers called for investigation into the act of writing and the nature of writing skill as well as for more rigorous experimental criteria in gathering data. Subsequent research (Emig, 1971; Mischel, 1974; Metzger, 1977; Perl, 1979; Matsuhashi, 1981) established a view of writing as a cognitive process. It also emphasized the role of planning in writing.

Theoretical studies of the mental operations in writing led Flower and Hayes (1981a, 1981b) to develop a conceptual model of the writing process. Their model describes the diversity of mental events that occur during writing on the basis of three main sub-processes: planning, translating, and reviewing.

According to this model, generating ideas for what to write, setting goals, and organizing writing are part of planning. Translating involves both word search and awareness of the rhetorical problem: the topic, audience, and circumstances of writing. The reviewing sub-process includes an on-going eval-

uation of what is being written, and an on-going revision of this writing. Planning, translating, and reviewing recur throughout the writing process.

I. i Skilled and Unskilled Writers

Writing proficiency is linked to the operation of these sub-processes according to a substantial body of research. Burtis, Bereiter, Scardamalia, and Tetroe (1983) found that the ability to plan writing is developmental and linked to age. Flower and Hayes (1981b) determined that the ability to plan is also one of the differences between expert writers and unskilled or novice writers. Unskilled writers tend to occupy themselves with sentence-level strategies. In contrast, expert writers employ more global planning strategies such as addressing the meaning of their writing, considering their audience, and shaping their communication.

Furthermore, expert writers seem to have internalized many mechanical and linguistic routines so that they are free to engage in higher-level mental activities such as generating ideas, planning, and goal setting (Beaugrande, 1984). If unskilled or novice writers concentrate on developing their ideas first and then attend to mechanical and linguistic problems afterward, then their writing may improve as well. Glynn, Britton, Muth, and Dogan (1982) found that students who were asked to concentrate on developing their ideas and ignore mechanics and sentence function generated more ideas and plans.

Distinctions between the writing of children and the writing of adults and the writing of unskilled and skilled adults are also found in the sub-processes of translating and reviewing. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1982) found that students in grades 4 and 6 had difficulty surveying the information they had about a subject.

Meanwhile, skilful adult writers have better knowledge of discourse forms and of how to develop appropriate material. Olson, Mack, and Duffy (1981) observed university students predicting the information they expected in narrative and expository texts and thus demonstrating discourse knowledge. Flower and Hayes (1981b) found expert writers creating most of the context of their writing in response to their own elaboration of a rhetorical problem. At the same time, the novice writers in their study only responded to the topic or to their last idea.

The new view of writing as a cognitive process leads to a fundamental shift in writing instruction. Writing instruction had been dominated by an emphasis on rhetorical forms and written products. Writing instruction had been largely confined to teaching such conventions as rules for punctuation, and patterns of rhetorical organization with teachers relying on practice and correction to improve student writing (Applebee, 1981).

The new view of writing leads to writing process instruction where teachers assist students in developing the planning and revising behaviours of skilled writers. Chiefly, these behaviours include generating ideas, acquiring an awareness of audience, and practising substantial revision.

I. ii Effective Writing Instruction

In terms of specific classroom practice and instructional effectiveness, research indicates that the study of traditional descriptive grammars has no effect in raising the quality of student writing and that too much emphasis on grammar may even have a detrimental effect by decreasing student motivation (Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer, 1963; Elley, 1976; Hillocks, 1986). In a meta-analysis of 60 key experimental studies with 72 experimental treatments, drawn from a review of 2,000 studies of

writing, Hillocks (1986) found that some free writing, sentence combining practice, some classroom study of models of writing, or teaching students in small groups how to evaluate their work with writing performance scales had the most powerful effects in improving student writing.

In classroom practice, the best application of these approaches to writing instruction would be a combination of them. Free writing or expressive writing where students write about whatever is of interest to them in journals encourages writing fluency. This helps students learn how to generate ideas. Students involved in activities where they combine simple sentences into more complex ones develop greater syntactic fluency. Models of good writing, when used with other instructional techniques, help students to set goals for their writing and help them to learn about writing conventions. Students internalize the writing performance scales they use in class and apply the criteria to their own work.

Additional research suggests certain prewriting activities can increase the amount of writing students do on an assignment. Indirectly, this will lead to better writing through students clarifying their examples and adding descriptive details. Anderson, Bereiter, and Smart (1980) observed that students wrote longer compositions merely by asking them to list the words that they thought they might use in their writing. Furthermore, Scardamalia and Bereiter (1986) suggest that games where students acquire knowledge about planning and writing processes are effective in improving their writing, too.

II. Second Language Writing

While research on writing processes has focused largely on first language students, emerging evidence has indicated simi-

larities between students composing in a first language and in a second (Arendt, 1987; Cumming, 1988; Edelsky, 1982; Gaskill, 1984, 1986; Jones & Tetroe, 1987; Raimes, 1985, 1991; Zamel, 1976, 1982, 1983). According to Raimes (1991), second language writing instruction used to be very limited in scope. In the early 1960's, writing in a second language was primarily used to test the accurate application of grammatical rules. It often employed sentence-level drills such as filling in blanks, substituting words, altering verb forms, or completing sentences. In the early 1970's, whole texts were provided in controlled composition activities where students manipulated language within the text. Typically, writing instruction was about correct language use.

However, as a result of the new focus on writing instruction in a first language, second language teachers began to set writing tasks that allowed students to select topics, generate ideas, draft and revise their writing and respond to one another's work. Second language writers now are encouraged to deal with their ideas and the organization of their writing before they attend to linguistic accuracy. The research publication on second language writing has supported these new trends in instruction (Cumming, 1988; Friedlander, 1990; Hall, 1990; Jones, 1982, 1985; Jones & Tetroe, 1987; Raimes, 1985, 1987, 1991.

II. i Second Language Writing Instruction

Teaching methods, useful in first language writing instruction, are being applied to second language instruction. These include journal writing, sentence combining, the study of writing models, and the peer evaluation of student writing using performance scales and questions. Other methods of writing instruction include the use of types of brainstorming, and games. The use of these teaching methods with small groups is the concern of

the remainder of this paper.

II. ii Small Group Work

Using small groups in classroom activities is an effective way to teach both writing and language skills. Small group work provides an opportunity for learners to focus on learning a language as well as learning how to write. Small group work also helps emphasize learning to communicate through interaction with others (Nunan, 1991). Long (1981) found that tasks in which students in a group discussion had unique information to contribute were tasks that developed more participation and thus facilitated second language acquisition. Long, Adams, and Castanos (1976) determined that small group tasks also prompted students to use a greater degree of language functions than teacher-fronted tasks.

Small group work also leads to effective writing instruction. Strong (1990) found that by focusing their attention on each other's writing in small groups, students wrote more elaborate answers. Whether a small group of students generated ideas or even examined the grammar of each other's compositions, there was a significant increase in the amount that they wrote over as few as ten hours of instruction.

There is additional research to support the use of small groups in writing. Contrary to the conventional wisdom that students might pick up one another's errors in small group work, Bruton and Samuda (1980) observed that learners could correct each other's errors successfully.

III. Techniques in Classroom Instruction

Although the act of writing is largely recursive, classroom activities that centre around students creating a paragraph or

writing an essay develop in a linear fashion. First, students generate ideas, develop a first draft, and then subsequently revise it for their classmates or for their teacher. Therefore, classroom activities might begin with students brainstorming their ideas.

III. i Talk-write

"Talk-write" is a good technique for brainstorming ideas. Students work together in pairs to assist each other in generating ideas. One student describes his or her ideas and the second student listens, asking for clarification whenever necessary. This process may take as long as 25 to 30 minutes for lengthier pieces of writing, or for weaker students. Afterward, the listener writes the first draft and the first student comments or provides suggestions.

The reasoning behind this method is that students are often better able to express themselves orally than through their writing. In addition, students write more with the encouragement of a partner. As well, working with a partner helps students to become more aware of their readers and of any part of their writing which needs further elaboration.

Variations of this procedure could be for the listener to record what the speaker says as dictation, instead of listening first and taking notes afterward. Another way is for the listener to make notes on what the speaker says. As the listener writes, he or she offers the speaker encouragement and may ask for clarification of certain ideas. The classroom activity might be represented as follows:

TALK-WRITE
(Version 1)
1. Student 1 talks about ideas

Student 2 listens and asks for elaboration
(Version 2)

2. Student 1 assists student 2 by reviewing the material being recorded and offering suggestions
Student 2 writes down Student 1's ideas

Talk-write exchanges between students show the second student assisting the first in developing ideas. Wixon and Stone (1977) record a talk-write exchange between two junior high school students writing about a favourite place: "Pete may say to his teammate, 'I want to write about when we lived in this big house that used to be a barn.' To which Linda may reply, 'What did you like about that barnhouse?' 'Well, it had these neat stairs . . . " (p. 71).

Talk-write can easily be adapted for work with students at the weakest levels of spoken and written English. Ling (1986) describes how to use talk-write with lower beginner students of English as a second language. Ling's students produced short first drafts of 6–10 sentences with a partner and then took their drafts to a small group.

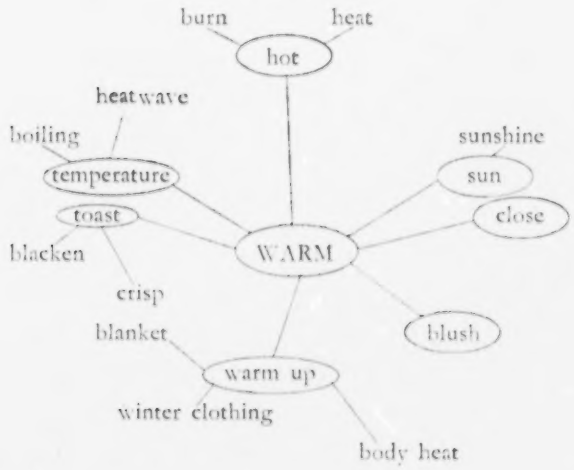
The students in the small group responded to any line in the first draft which they felt needed further development or clarification. The first line of one draft "I came to Canada about one year" triggered questions from the groups such as "Where did you come from? How long have you been in Vancouver? Did you come in winter?" because the student writer had forgotten some important details in the composition (Ling, 1986, p. 67). Small group sessions such as these can even be recorded to assist the writer in revising later.

III. ii Word Mapping or Clustering

Semantic mapping or clustering is a very different technique

than talk-write. Rather than use questioning to generate ideas, it draws upon word grouping, word association, and visual imagery. The word maps or clusters are generated through small group discussion. The technique helps students in choosing suitable words for writing about a particular subject as well as assisting them in generating new ideas.

When combined with reading, listening, or speaking, word mapping can offer a context for learning new words. The topic or concept is highlighted in a circle, and is linked to subsidiary concepts by lines or arrows. Recording these secondary concepts may lead students to further associations which in turn will lead to more words and associations. The procedure for word mapping needs to be demonstrated to students. They should become familiar with it before they use it in small groups. The procedure could be demonstrated to a whole class as follows:



WORD MAPPING

1. Write a topic or target word such as *warm* on the chalkboard.
2. Have the class members brainstorm words related to the topic.
3. Connect the brainstormed words such as "hot" or "sun" to *warm* by lines or arrows to suggest their relationships:
4. As students brainstorm further, record new words such as "burn" and "heat" or "sunshine" to the words "hot" and "sun."
5. Discuss the words on the semantic map. Students should be encouraged to discover how the concepts are related to each other.
6. If necessary, revise the map after discussion. Add the new concepts and even phrases to the map as the lesson progresses.

Once familiar with word mapping, the students should use the technique in small groups working independently of the teacher.

III. iii Secret Friend Journals

Another classroom technique for developing student writing is the use of journals. This kind of activity encourages students to express their ideas and their concerns in writing (Kitagawa, and Kitagawa, 1987). Journal writing appeals to students because they can choose their own topics. Journal writing develops their writing fluency. It also promotes their audience awareness because students' journals are eventually read by other students or by their teacher who responds to them with comments and opinions.

Because the focus of this activity is on writing fluency and self-expression, the teacher responds to the students' ideas rather than corrects their grammar. The teacher's comments are all positive ones and have nothing to do with the quality of expression. Typically, this journal writing is done outside of class. However, this activity may be introduced in class and some time allowed for it.

Although many composition teachers acknowledge the value

of journal writing, most complain about the marking burden of responding to students' journals. Several alternatives exist. Of course, teachers could respond less frequently. Alternately, in a class which included some time for journal writing, the teacher could maintain a journal, too, writing it in class. Both the teacher and the students in the class would exchange journals with one another each week. Most of the tine, students would be exchanging journals with each other. But over the term, the teacher would have read each student's journal at least once.

There is another promising suggestion for providing an effective response to students journals and yet minimizing the teacher's participation. This is the use "secret friend journals" (Green, and Green, 1993).

Instead of students writing for their teacher, students write to other students. Their teacher either pairs them with a student in another of the teacher's classes, or works with a second teacher to set up an exchange of journals between two classes. Each pair of "secret friends" shares the same journal. The journal is identified only by a number and not by the students' names. Each partner writes an entry each week. The teacher collects the journals and checks them off before passing them to the second student. Keeping student identities secret motivates the students to use written English to try to find out information about their partner.

Green and Green (1993) suggest several important steps in implementing secret friend journals:

SECRET FRIEND JOURNALS

1. Design a regular schedule for rotating the journals.
2. For two classes of uneven size, volunteers will have to maintain two journals and should be offered additional marks.
3. Choose suitable partners and avoid pairing students who know one another.

4. Specify a minimum length for the journals and emphasize the communicativeness of the activity rather than grammatical accuracy.
5. Foster responsibility to partners.
6. Initially, provide the students some suggestions about what they should write.
7. Prepare checklists with students' names and journal numbers.
8. At the end of the activity, try to get the students together for a party so that partners can meet. (p. 22, 23)

Using journals this way may reduce a teacher's workload and yet still provide students with a worthwhile activity. The activity has the additional advantage of engaging students in writing communicatively for a different audience than their teacher.

III. iv Sentence Combining Practice

Writing skills may be taught to students through problem-solving activities for groups of three or four students. One of these skills is syntactic fluency. It can be taught through sentence combining problems where students try to incorporate simple sentences into longer, more complex ones (O'Hare, 1973; Morenberg, Deker and Kerek, 1978).

The emphasis on problem-solving and competition is important. The teacher provides small groups of students with a series of simple sentences to combine within a certain time limit. The time limit and the competition between the groups creates a game-like atmosphere.

Commercial texts of sentence combining are available. The teacher can develop sentences for this activity to illustrate certain grammatical principles. The use of prepositional phrases, relative clauses, appositives, or the use of coordinate and subordinate clauses can be taught through sentence combining. Sentences to be combined using a prepositional phrase might resemble the

following:

> The smallest boy heard a tiny voice.
> It came from far away.
> *The smallest boy heard a tiny voice from far away.*

Sentences to be combined through the use of a relative clause might take another form:

> The bowl of fruit contained apples, oranges, and pears.
> The bowl of fruit was sitting on the table.
> *The bowl of fruit that was sitting on the table contained apples, oranges, and pears.*

Sentences to be combined through a use of appositives might be similar to these:

> Nancy Greene won a gold medal in the 1968 Winter Olympics.
> She is a Canadian skier.
> *Nancy Greene, a Canadian skier, won a gold medal in the 1968 Winter Olympics.*

More skilled student writers would obviously need more challenging examples and the teacher would have to identify appropriate resources or develop the material. More difficult problems could be introduced as well as longer passages. Students might increase their ability to use coordinate and subordinate clauses through trying to combine sentences such as these:

> The hikers were at a campground.
> They were not allowed to build a fire.
> The forest was too dry.
> It hadn't rained for several weeks.
> The forest was vulnerable to fire.
> *The hikers were at a campground, but they were not allowed to make a fire because the forest was too dry: it hadn't rained for several weeks and the forest was vulnerable to fire.*

This kind of problem-solving in the classroom motivates students.

It also engages them in working with the language. Ultimately, they may see where they can introduce greater sentence variety into their own writing.

III. v Using Writing Models

There is a long tradition of teachers using models of good writing to teach their students. In fact, the study of rhetorical models for the purposes of public speaking and for writing could be said to have originated in the academies of Classical Greece and Rome where students memorized speeches. The idea was that students would incorporate the principles of rhetoric into their own thinking and that this would help them to compose texts.

More recently, the study of models of writing has been out of favour with some composition teachers because it was used so exclusively in the past. However, contemporary research advocates some use of writing models in composition instruction. Teaching writing models is best used with instruction in generating ideas and in creating effective sentences and detailed examples. It is one thing to appreciate good writing and another thing to write well.

Writing models of a well-organized paragraph or of an expository essay or a persuasive essay are often introduced in composition classes. Students are asked to imitate certain features of them such as the use of topic sentences, transitional phrases, the degree of detail in examples, and the thesis statements. Ingenious teachers use everything from students labelling flowchart models of the organization of a five-paragraph essay to mini-debates for developing persuasive arguments.

Writing models can be used in composition instruction in a novel and interesting way through small group work. Once

again, problem-solving activities where there is a time limit and competition between groups is the approach here.

One use of models which is popular among second language teachers is the "strip story." Students in small groups work together to find the correct sequence of sentences for a narrative, descriptive, or expository paragraph which has its sentences in a scrambled order. The scrambled sentences may be reproduced on a handout. More effectively, the paragraph can be cut into strips and placed in an envelope. Each group is given an envelope and group members manipulate and re-order the sentences, testing their ideas about paragraph organization.

Teachers select material from authentic sources such as newspapers, magazines, encyclopedias, and texts, and adapt the material. They may create their own paragraphs such as this:

> THE JOURNEY: NARRATIVE PARAGRAPH
> The nine hour flight was exciting for the children.
> The day we left for our holiday in London, we started early.
> The plane took off at 10: 15 am.
> We ate breakfast quickly and got to the airport by eight o'clock.
> The alarm woke us at 5: 45 am.
> We checked our bags and had coffee before heading to the lounge.
> We arrived early in London, but my parents were there, anxious to see their grandchildren.

This scrambled paragraph illustrates a chronological sequence of events with frequent references to time as well as the use of words such as "before" and "early" as simple transitions. The topic sentence is also a good example as it provides a very complete indication of what will be described later in the paragraph.

One consideration in selecting suitable material for this kind of activity is in the type of paragraph chosen and its length. Descriptive paragraphs and longer and more complex paragraphs

may be ordered in several different ways. The composition lesson then would have to be a different one, perhaps a discussion of the possible ways a paragraph might be written.

Essay organization can be taught in a similar way through using problem-solving activities. Small groups of students can be asked to correctly order the scrambled paragraphs of an essay. This activity leads quite naturally to a class discussion of the functions of introductory and concluding paragraphs and of the transition words that hint at the paragraph order. Omitting one of the paragraphs and setting each group the challenge of writing a replacement for it provides the teacher with a chance to assess the students' understanding of the essay form and their ability to imitate it.

Subsequent activities for students in the class might include writing an entire essay using a similiar structure and transitions. From here, the teacher might help students to learn how to develop topic sentences and thesis statements in individualized instruction and in teacher conferences with students.

III. vi Peer Evaluation and Performance Scales

The final stage of students writing a paragraph, or an essay involves review and revision. A student revising writing tends to focus on relatively superficial errors such as punctuation, spelling, and word choice. The student rarely undertakes more substantial revision such as re-ordering the examples in a paragraph, refining a thesis statement and the rewriting of transitions and examples. Teacher conferences with students can help redirect a student's attention to these concerns. But teachers haven't enough time to conference frequently with their students and by offering solutions they may even take away some of their students' initiative.

An attractive alternative is the use of peer evaluation scales and performance scales. Peer evaluation is a more efficient classroom strategy than teacher conferences with students because the entire class of students can be involved in writing or discussing writing at the same time. The teacher can monitor their activities and offer assistance where needed. Peer evaluation is routinely used in high school English classes in Canada and the U.S. as well as in colleges in freshman composition courses.

Peer evaluation is a procedure which needs to be introduced very early in a composition course. Students should be given clear outlines of how peer evaluation operates and thorough explanation of the purpose of peer evaluation. Bell (1991) describes the essential steps in the procedure:

PEER EVALUATION

1. The student writer asks the group for assistance on one or two elements of an essay.
2. The student reads his or her essay and other group members try to spot errors by listening to the reading.
3. After another reading, group members read a copy of the paper.
4. The group members answer the writer's questions and support their opinions by reference to the writer's paper.
5. Group members, in turn, respond to something they liked and something they didn't like about the paper. Group members let the writer know what he or she failed to communicate.
6. While the group is commenting on the paper, the writer takes quick notes to aid in revision.
7. The writer does not argue or offer justification.
8. The teacher monitors each group for the discussion of a paper and helps sort out trivial suggestions from substantive ones by supporting the most perceptive comments from the students. (p. 67-69)

Central to some teachers' use of peer evaluation is the use of a performance scale. This scale may take the form of a checklist

for a particular assignment. It may also take the form of a holistic scale suitable for a variety of assignments because it describes general features of content, organization, structure, and the mechanics or grammar of effective writing. The following example is of an assignment checklist:

CHECKLIST: EXPOSITORY PARAGRAPH

Content

A) Is there an example for each characteristic or item described in the topic sentence?

B) Which is the strongest example? Why? How could the others be made stronger?

C) Is there a minimum of ten sentences?

Organization

D) Does the topic sentence describe the subject in a complete and interesting fashion? Write an improved version of the topic sentence.

E) Write an improved version of the concluding sentence.

Sentence Variety

F) Are most of the sentences in the paragraph compound, complex and compound-complex ones? Record the best sentence and explain why you think it is so effective?

G) Are there any sentences with unclear ideas?

Grammar

H) Have you found any examples of incorrect subject-verb agreement, pronoun reference, tense errors, or any other grammatical errors? Provide a few examples, if so.

The checklist should as straightforward as possible so that students can use it easily with their work. It also should be used as the teacher's guideline in finally grading the assignment.

If the performance scale for an assignment is a student checklist, then the checklist becomes the focus of student discussion. The advantage of a checklist is that it streamlines student discussion about writing. This same feature is also a disadvantage because a checklist provides so much direction that it takes the

initiative from students and they may not learn as much about writing.

Another kind of performance scale, a general or holistic guide to effective writing, allows for student initiative. To use it properly, students have to learn how to distinguish between the levels of writing performance described at different points on the scale. As well, the more points on the scale, and the more elaborate the description of each level of writing, the more difficult it becomes for students to learn the scale and apply it. A simple general scale usually is more effective in classroom use, especially if students write several essays that can be analyzed with it.

A SAMPLE PERFORMANCE SCALE

6

Clear central idea or thesis
Thoughtful ideas and details or examples
Effective introduction, body and conclusion
Fluent, variety in sentence patterns, and in sentence length, and good vocabulary
Minor errors in grammar and punctuation

5

Conventional central idea, details or examples
Adequate introduction, body and conclusion
Some variety in sentence length and pattern
Minor errors in grammar and punctuation do not impede communication

4

Few ideas and details or weak expression of them
Superficial introduction, body and conclusion
Barely functional sentences, little variety in length, repetitious or inappropriate word choice
Both major and minor errors in grammar, punctuation and capitalization

3

Repetitive ideas and details

Inadequately developed introduction, body and conclusion; transitional phrases used mechanically
Sentences with limited and occasionally inaccurate word choice
Major errors in grammar, punctuation and capitalization impede communication

2

Unclear ideas and details
Confused pattern of emphasis and development
Frequent sentence fragments, run-on sentences and incorrect use of words
Frequent errors in grammar, punctuation and capitalization seriously impede communication

1

Very undeveloped ideas, irrelevant details
No apparent plan of development
No sense of sentence structure, very limited vocabulary, little use of standard English
Constant errors in grammar, punctuation and capitalization block communication

In learning how to use the scale, students undergo the same kind of training as essay exam raters using holistic scales to grade compositions. Both students and raters look for such general features in a paper as content, essay organization, sentence structure, vocabulary use, detailed examples, and type and frequency of grammatical error.

Rating a series of essay examples using a particular scale familiarizes students with it. An example at the top of the scale should be within the range of the class's ability. It should be competently written rather than expertly written. A teacher selects the essays in advance so that there is one to illustrate each level of writing performance. The Test of Written English (TWE) which forms part of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) issues both holistic rating scales and sample compositions used

in the TWE. Other sources for the graded essays might include commercially available material or essays that the teacher has previously marked.

Using this kind of performance scale helps students to learn the features of effective writing and to form an accurate picture of their own work. However, even though students may receive an accurate assessment of their writing, this alone will not offer much help in finding ways to write better. Ideally, performance scales should be used in tandem with the small group discussion described earlier so students can get specific suggestions for improving a paper. In addition, students should learn how to use the techniques described earlier for developing their ideas, and increasing their writing fluency, and sentence variety.

IV. Conclusion

The writing process is a complex one and teaching writing has always been a challenging task. But recent interest in research on the writing process and in the search for effective writing instruction has helped identify a number of useful techniques. Research publication in second language instruction supports the use of these methods with second language students.

Composition teachers of students of a second language need to familiarize themselves with the new focus on writing process instruction. Teachers should use small group work where possible in their classes and introduce new techniques into their teaching. These techniques include brainstorming, talk-write, word mapping or clustering, journal writing, sentence combining, and peer evaluation and the use of performance scales. The use of these techniques will assist students in improving the planning, translating, and reviewing in their writing process. It should be clear that the emphasis in writing classes should be on

student activities that support the development of their writing processes rather than on correcting and grading students' papers.

References

Anderson, V., Bereiter, C., and Smart, D. (1980). Activation of Semantic Networks in Writing: Teaching Students How to Do It Themselves. Paper presented at the annual meeting of AERA.

Applebee, A. (1981). *Writing in the Secondary School: English and the Content Areas.* Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Arendt, V. (1987). A Protocol-based Study of L1 and L2 Writing. *English Language Teaching Journal, 41,* 257–267.

Beaugrande, R. (1984). *Text Production: Toward a Science of Composition.* Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Bell, J. (1991). Using Peer Groups in ESL Writing Classes. *TESL Canada Journal, 8,* 65–71.

Bereiter, C., Scardamalia, M. (1982). From Conversation to Composition: The Role of Instruction in a Developmental Process. In R. Glaser (Ed.) *Advances in instructional psychology.* (vol. 2), Hillsdale, N. J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Braddock, R., Lloyd-Jones, R. and Schoer, L. (1963). *Research in Written Composition.* Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Bruton, G., and Samuda, G. (1980). Learner and Teacher Roles in the Treatment of Oral Error in Group Work. *RELC Journal,* 11, 49–63.

Burtis, P., Bereiter, C. Scardamalia, M., Tetroe, J., (1983). The Development of Planning in Writing. In B. Kroll & G. Wells, *Explorations in the Development of Writing: Theory, Research and Practice.* Chichester, U. K.: John Wiley & Sons.

Cumming, A. (1988). Writing Expertise and Second Language Proficiency. *Language Learning, 38,* 1–71.

Edelsky, C. (1982). Writing in a Bilingual Program: The Relation of L1 and L2 Texts. *TESOL Quarterly, 16,* 211–228.

Emig, J. (1971). *The Composing Process of Twelfth Graders.* Urbana, IL.: National Council of Teachers of English.

Flower, L., & Hayes, R. (1981a). A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing. *College Composition and Communication, 32,* 365–387.

Flower, L., & Hayes, R. (1981b). The Pregnant Pause: An Inquiry into the Nature of Planning. *Research in the Teaching of English, 15,* 229–244.

Friedlander, A. (1990). Composing in English: Effects of a First Language on Writing in English as a Second Language. In B. Kroll (Ed.) *Second Language Writing: Research Insights for the Classroom.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Gaskill, W. (1984). Problems and Revisions in the Composing Process of a Taiwanese ESL Student. Paper presented at the 18th Annual TESOL Convention, Houston.

Gaskill, W. (1986). Revising in Spanish and English as a Second Language: A Process-oriented Study of Composition. *Dissertation Abstracts International, 47*: 3747–A.

Glynn, S., Britton, B., Muth, K., and Dogan, N. (1982) Writing and Revising Persuasive Documents: Cognitive Demands. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 74*, 557–567.

Green, C., Green, J. (1993). Secret Friend Journals. *TESOL Journal, Spring*, 20–23.

Hall, C. (1990). Managing the Complexity of Revising Across Languages. *TESOL Quarterly, 24*, 43–60.

Hillocks, G., Jr. (1986). *Research on Written Composition: New Directions for Teaching.* Urbana, IL: National Council for Research in English: ERIC.

Jones, S. (1982). Composing in a Second Language: A Process Study. Paper presented at the annual meeting of Teachers to Speakers of Other Languages, Honolulu.

Jones, S. (1985). Problems with Monitor Use in Second Language Composing. In M. Rose (Ed.) *Studies in Writer's Block and Other Composing Process Problems*, New York: Guilford Press.

Jones, S., Tetroe, J. (1987). Composing in a Second Language. In A. Matsuhashi (Ed.) *Writing in Real Time: Modelling Production Processes.* Norwood, N. J.: Ablex.

Kitagawa, M., Kitagawa, C. (1987). Making Connections with Writing: An Expressive Writing Model in Japanese Schools. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Long, M. (1981). Input, Interaction and Second Language Acquisition. In H. Winitz (Ed.) *Native Language and Foreign Language Acquisition*, (Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, No. 379: 259–278). New York Academy of Sciences.

Long, M., Adams, L., Castanos, F. (1976). Doing Things with Words: Verbal Interaction in Lockstep and Small Group Situations. In R. Crymes & J. Fanselow (Eds.) *On TESOL '76*. Washington, DC: TESOL.

Matsuhashi, A. (1981). Pausing and Planning: The Tempo of Written Discourse Production. *Research in the Teaching of English, 15*, 113–134.

Metzger, E. (1977). Causes of Failure to Learn to Write: Exploratory Case Studies at Grade Seven, Grade Ten, and College Level. *Dissertation Abstracts International, 38*: 3346–A.

Mischel, T. (1974). A Case Study of a Twelfth-grade Writer. *Research in the Teaching of English, 8*, 303–14.

Morenberg, M., Daiker, and Kerek, A. (1978). Sentence Combining at the College Level: An Experimental Study. *Research in the Teaching of English, 12*, 245–256.

Nunan, D. (1991). Communicative Tasks and the Language Curriculum. *TESOL Quarterly, 25*, 279–295.

O'Hare, F. (1973). *Sentence Combining: Improving Student Writing Without Formal Grammar Instruction.* National Council of Teachers of English Committee on Research Report Series, No. 15. Urbana, Ill., NCTE, ED 073 483.

Olson, G., Mack, R., Duffy, S. (1981). Cognitive Aspects of Genre. *Poetics, 10*,

283–315.

Perl, S. (1979). The Composing Processes of Unskilled College Writers. *Research in the Teaching of English, 13*, 317–336.

Raimes, A. (1985). What Unskilled ESL Students Do as They Write: A Classroom Study of Composing. *TESOL Quarterly, 19*, 229–258.

Raimes, A. (1987). Language Proficiency, Writing Ability, and Composing Strategies: A Study of ESL College Student Writers. *Language Learning, 37*, 439–468.

Raimes, A. (1991). Out of the Woods: Emerging Traditions in the Teaching of Writing. *TESOL Quarterly, 25*, 407–430.

Strong, G. (1990). A Comparison Group Study on the Effects of Instruction in Writing Heuristics on the Expository Writing of ESL Students. (Unpublished master's thesis), University of British Columbia.

Zamel, V. (1976). Teaching Composition in the ESL Classroom: What We Can Learn from Research in the Teaching of English. *TESOL Quarterly, 10*, 67–76.

Zamel, V. (1982). Writing: The Process of Discovering Meaning. *TESOL Quarterly, 16*, 195–209.

Zamel, V. (1983). The Composing Processes of Advanced ESL students: Six case studies. *TESOL Quarterly, 17*, 165–187.